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THE LEMON GROVE

REVIEW



Baldwin selects chamber activist for East County 'Woman of the Year'

by Cheryl Cohen

Mary England, long-lauded former executive director and now community liaison for the Lemon Grove Chamber of Commerce, has been named 1999 77th Assembly District Woman of the Year by Assemblyman Steve Baldwin.

Citing her tireless efforts as co-organizer (with Ilse Hanning) of the group called Citizens for Proposition LL and her contributions to the city of Lemon Grove through the chamber, Baldwin found her to be the logical choice for the award.

Previous winners of the Woman of the Year Award have been Alice Larson of La Mesa, Dr. Libia Gil of Chula Vista and Thelma Lewis of Spring Valley.

"I'm overwhelmed!" said England. "To be in that circle with those ladies is amazing."

Apparently not that amazing. When the Lemon Grove School District bond measure passed with over 80 percent of the vote, a consulting firm in Sacramento was

so impressed, it invited England and Hanning to come to the capital and share their organizational secrets.

Her success is no secret to the East Countians she serves. She never stops. Always draped in something gold and dangerously fingernailed, she flirtatiously solicits money from everyone in her path for her many causes.

She's omnipresent at every service group and civic organization in Lemon Grove and is never underestimated by government officials, who fully expect to see her name on the ballot in the next city council election.

"Mary is a great example of what an involved citizen can accomplish," said Baldwin. "We're going to bring her up to Sacramento where she'll meet women from all over the state who will be receiving like awards on the floor of the assembly."

When asked where she'll go from here, England insists she can only focus on her immediate project, the Lemon Grove Chamber of Commerce Leadership



Mary England's tireless efforts to help local business has landed her a plaque and a trip to Sacramento. Photo by Cheryl Cohen

Awards, set for Mar. 20. The event was almost single-handedly created by England last year and doubles as the installation dinner.

England is very excited about her trip with Baldwin to receive her own award, but doesn't skip a beat to take the opportunity to herald "her" chamber officers.

"Did I tell you who the

new officers are?" she asked. "President Jim Murphy of J&L Security; Vice-President Trish Telles of Dell Enterprises; Secretary Christine Day-Reyes of Union Bank and Treasurer; Danny Mitchell of Veronica's Dry Cleaners and Silk Flowers," she rattled off in one breath.

"Now, I just have to figure out what I should wear."

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Office training alums give new students shot in arm

Some graduates of Office Professional Training (OPT) at Grossmont College say the program saved their lives and enabled them to provide a better life for their children.

OPT, an intensive 20-week course, is designed to help individuals who feel trapped in dead-end, low-paying jobs or need some support and training to enable them to enter the workforce and become self-sufficient.

OPT graduates remain loyal and support the program, including mentoring students who follow. Mentors like Sheryl Magana, who graduated in 1997, immediately went to work in the insurance industry.

She had been a welfare recipient for 16 years and was raising five children. To provide for her children, Magana knew she needed a good job and updated skills.

"In the OPT program, I overcame my shyness when I became a tutor for my classmates," she said. "I even learned the basics, like how to act in a work environment and how to dress for the job."

Magana and other graduates will return to campus on Friday for the next "Mentor Night" from 6:30 to 9 p.m. in the cafeteria in the Student Center.

Every semester more than 150 students and mentors attend Mentor Night for dinner and socializing and to support and encourage current OPT students.

Participants take about 20 units of college credits in their choice of three career tracks: account clerk, insurance clerk or computer-trained office assistant.

The OPT coursework is almost double the number of credits students take when

enrolled in regular college programs.

Mentor Night is held mid-point in the semester at a time when many students feel like they can't do it any more. The schoolwork and juggling of the family responsibilities seems overwhelming.

It's at this point that encouragement from mentors, faculty, staff and fellow classmates becomes so important to keep those struggling on track.

Since it began in 1985, OPT has trained more than 1,500 people for the workforce. About 90 percent of the graduates find employment in just 90 days after graduating with starting salaries averaging \$10 an hour.

The OPT program is free to qualifying students who come from all types of backgrounds including welfare recipients, displaced homemakers, single parents and homeless adults.

OPT has been primarily funded by federal Job Training Partnership Act grants and supplemented by private contributions and Grossmont College. The Employment Training Panel is a new funding source for this program.

For more information, call Dr. Mary Leslie at 644-7533.

Real estate law seminar set

The San Diego Association of Realtors is presenting a seminar on 1999 Laws Impacting Real Estate on from 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. March 16 at its offices at 4845 Ronson Court in Kearny Mesa.

Special guest speaker Gov Hutchinson, attorney for the California Association of Realtors, will cover the new

State offers tips for choosing health club

The California Department of Consumer Affairs warns East County residents about health club rip-offs.

"Getting in shape is one of the most popular resolutions we make when the year is young," said Consumer Affairs Director Kathleen Hamilton. "The department has information to help you avoid problems and exercise your consumer rights when selecting a facility that's right for you."

Scams in the past have included high pressure pitches that ask for several years' payment in advance. Some consumers have suffered monetary losses when their clubs have closed. "Pay as you exercise" facilities can limit your risk of loss, however, they usually cost more per month.

Before joining a health club, ask yourself these questions: What can I afford to pay? What types of services do I want? What facilities and equipment do I need? What are my fitness goals?

Comparison shopping is important, so plan on visiting and evaluating at least three facilities. Be sure to visit the facility at the times you will use it and ask other users how well they like it.

When you decide on a fa-

cility, don't be rushed into signing a contract. Since there is no standard contract, it's important that you read it carefully, and that you know and understand the commitments you are making.

For instance, some contracts authorize the facility to deduct your payments from your checking account; some authorize the facility to renew the contract for you unless you express a desire to terminate. Don't sign until you agree with the facility's proposed terms.

The contract can't obligate you to make payments totaling more than \$1,000 (excluding interest or finance charges), and its duration cannot exceed three years.

If you change your mind, you may cancel the contract by midnight of the third business day after you have signed it. If you move more than 25 miles from the health club and it is unable to transfer the contract to a comparable facility, you don't have to make payments for any services you haven't yet received (although you may be liable for a cancellation fee of up to \$100).

Consumers can receive a copy of "Membership in Health Clubs, Spas and Studios" by calling 916-323-7239 or writing to DCA Publications at 401 S Street, Suite 100, Sacramento, CA 95814. This will tell you how to select the facility that's best for you. Additional information is available on the department's Web site at www.dca.ca.gov.

The Department of Consumer Affairs is a leading consumer advocate in California government, establishing standards of competency for more than 200 professions and occupations.

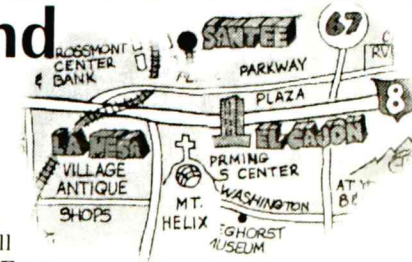
Friends gear up



The first official planning meeting for the 9th Annual International Friendship Festival is scheduled for 7 to 8:30 p.m. tomorrow at the El Cajon Community Center, 195 E. Douglas Ave. The purpose of this meeting is to recruit new ethnic groups to participate in the festival, as well as to orient all those involved in how the festival is planned and operated. The International Friendship Festival, which is scheduled for the weekend of Sept. 25 and 26, will continue the tradition of celebrating ethnic diversity. Ethnic groups who participated in 1998 and who have committed to this year are asked to send a representative to this meeting to receive updated information and to greet potential new members of their ethnic community. You may call 441-1754 for more information.

Photo by Steven Saint

Around Town



San Diego Chargers coach Mike Riley will address the East County Regional Chamber of Commerce's First Friday breakfast at 7:15 a.m. this Friday, at the American Legion Post #282, 8118 University Ave. in La Mesa. The sponsor is California Bank & Trust, formerly known as Grossmont Bank ...

Pat Setter and Greg Stotts of East County recently received the Sales Professional of the Quarter award from the Sales & Marketing Council of the Building Industry Association of San Diego. Setter and Stotts were recognized for third-quarter accomplishments at Waterford at the Lake at Scripps Ranch Villages by Brookfield Homes. The judges noted the sales team's ability to

sell homes priced over \$350,000 without the benefit of models ...

Thomas J. Saiz, CPA has been named a partner in Calderon, Jaham and Osborn Certified Public Accountants and Consultants' San Diego office. Saiz will direct the continuing statewide growth in the firm's governmental, health-care and community college practice.

"Thomas was selected to be a partner because of his proven commitment to excellence and service," says partner Victor Calderon, a former trustee of the Grossmont-Cuyamaca Community College District ... Phyllis Dorfman, owner of Rainbow Travel at Grossmont Center, is planning her 16th annual ladies-only vacation trip. This year, Dorfman will guide about 50 women to Monaco for an excursion she's calling "Merry Mayhem in Monte Carlo." Activities scheduled during the March 16 - 23 holiday include shopping, trips to Roman ruins and museums, cooking classes, wine tasting and gambling on the Riviera. Cost is \$1,649 per person ...

Western Mechanical Heating and Air Conditioning of Santee has completed installation of a high-tech HVAC system to service the clean-room areas at Presidio Components, a computer manufacturer in Mira Mesa. The new HVAC equipment, including high-tech HEPA filters, booster fans and new ductwork, service rooms which must be kept dust-free ...



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